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NATIVE NASSAU

Native Nassau

A Memory *of*
New Providence Island

Written and illustrated by
Julia Warner Michael

Sept. 23. 1904
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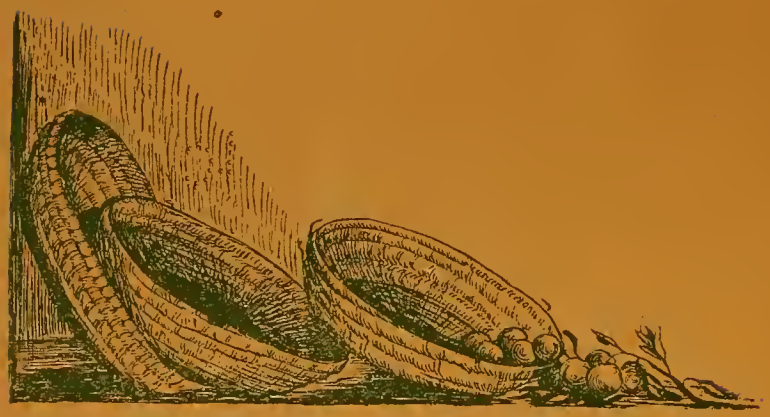
Most lovingly I dedicate this pen memory of Nassau to the dear friends who made my stay in their far off Island homes a most happy and appreciative recollection.



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By Julia Warner Michael

Arranged and printed by Hal Marchbanks's Print Shop
on the tow path at Lockport, New York

"Nassau."

WAY in the midst of the emerald sea,
Soft kissed by the breath from the bluest of skies,
Apart from the world like a beautiful dream,
Bahamian Summerland lang'rously lies.

All day the bright sunlight of shimmering gold
Is hanging on orange trees balls of its fire;
All night the white moonlight, with silvering brush,
Is painting this city of wondrous desire.

The palms are her spires that go searching the sky,
The lapping of waves is the sound of her mart,
The bursting of roses the sign of her life,
The fluttering sails the pulse of her heart.

Each day the queer shuffle of soft, slippered tread
Goes up and goes down her white streets by the sea,
While musical voices are vending their wares
Of "groun'nuts" and "dillies a threpence for three."

All day her white boats, like the gleaming sea gulls,
Go silently skimming the breast of the bay
Which mothers the coral of crimson and white,
The purple and yellow sea-ferns, where they play.

Her caskets of treasures, which cradle her wealth,
Are borne on the tips of her tropical trees,
While coffers that burst with the bulk they must hold
Lie lapped in the sands of her wavering seas.

She rests in a peace that has dropped from the stars,
While mystical love is the nymph of her spell
Where, dropped in the waves of the Summerland sea,
She lies on their crests like a sun-tinted shell.

"Chuck a Copper, Boss."

OU may ride to the east or to the west
To the part of the island you like best,
But wherever you go you're sure to hear
This refrain of the darkies, far and near:

"Boss, Boss, chuck a copper, Boss!
Boss, let de penny come;
Got no ma an' got no pa,
Poor orphan an' got no home,
Boss, Boss, let de penny come."

You may ride with your sweetheart or ride alone
By the old time forts or sad sea moan,
But there'll come to your musings first or last
These most pitiful pleadings shrill and fast: —Refrain

In a "six-shilling hack" a little while
Or the Governor's coach, for mile on mile,
You may drive where you will, but never free
From this characteristic simple plea: —Refrain

They are big and are little, short and tall,
With a sack or with nothing on at all;
They are grinning or pouting, grave or gay,
But they never forget this bit to say: —Refrain

You may drive in the morning, noon or night;
You may throw them your coppers left and right,
But the same little words will reach you till
You are sure that their cry is never still.

"Boss, Boss, chuck a copper, Boss!
Boss, let de penny come;
Got no ma an' got no pa,
Poor orphan an' got no home,
Boss, Boss, let de penny come."

"A Drive in Nassau."

MORNIN', Boss. You want a carriage?
Yas suh, show you all aroun'.
Jes came in this mawnin'? Wall I'll
Take you all aroun' dis town.
Dis yeah street we's on is Bay street,
Dat's de Sponge Exchange,—Yas suh,
Busy mos' the time I'm spectin'.
Dis yeah's steameh day, the stuh
Do be somethin'. Yeah's some buildin's—
See, dat's wheah you gets youah pos',
Dat's de bank, and dat's de buildin'
Wheah de pahl'ment sits. But mos'
Look roun' at dat silk-cotten—
Aint she whoppin' big old tree?
Yas suh, dey has pictures of it
'Roun' mos' anywheah you see.
Boss, you got a cigarette yeah?
'Tanks, now I can talk a bit.
Yeah's wat's called de 'Queen's Staihcase' suh,
(Jes a minute——now its lit),
Done in ole slabe time, dey tell me,
Want to climb it? Yas, I'll wait.
Golly, I been bohn to do it.
Shuah, its gettin' kin'o'late.
Well, yeah's Eastern Dribe. Dat islan'?
Dat's Hog Island—No Boss, true
I aint funnin', dat's its name, suh.
Dis yeah's Fort Montagu.
Now I's gwine to take you into
Grant's Town. Dat's a 'dillie' tree:
Coc'nut, custard apple, sour-sop
Dat las' one hefo' you see.

Yas, hybiscus mighty putty
But dey only las' a day;
Euch'ris lilly beat em holler
Mos' de white folks gwine to say.
Wat's dis place we jes now passin?
Dis is Gov'ment House an' groun',
Dat's a statue o' Columbus.
Now I specs we bes' turn down,
Dis way shorely is de nearest,
C'lonyal Hotel b'low dis hill.
Yeah we ah, suh. Yas, good-day, Boss.
"Say! you hoss, caint you stan' still."

A negro, describing his friend's singing qualities, remarked; "He got a voice like a horgan and a constitution like a concertina."

"A Nassau Menu."

SOME soup that's thick, some hominy,
A heaping dish of peas and rice,
A platter of the plantains, fried,
With sweet potatoes always nice;
Shell fish, all stuffed, and soft-shell crabs,
And everthing with peppers spiced,
(Both red and green), from rice and fish
To ripe tomatoes, freshly sliced;
A little bit of good conch souse,
A splendid cup of English tea,
Then comes a taste of sour-sop ice
With little cakes served daintily.
A brimming glass of fresh limeade
And then, if you'll not think it rash,
The last concoction, which is called,
A dainty dish of "heav'nly hash."

"Don't make no promises you is gwine regret, 'cause too much promise like toy balloon—soon bust."

"The Market Woman."

THE sun lies white on the coral street
And softly down by its gleaming walls
There sounds the shuffle of darky tread,

As slow and measured its cadence falls.
The long, full body sways back and forth,
The arms like pendulums gently swing;
The turbaned head, with its wide, flat tray,
Is straight to poise the incessant fling.

A waist and skirt that are snowy white,
A face of ebony's polished hue
With gleam of mother-of-pearl, inlaid,
Where pinkish lips part, smiling at you;
The turban, crimson, yellow, and brown,
That's topped with burden of luscious gold,
Or turkey's plumage of blue and green
That mists the light in its feathered hold.

The sun lies hot on the glaring walls,
The shuffle dies in the old Bay street
As, swinging under the palms, she goes,
The market woman with slippered feet.
The picture lingers when she is gone,
For every dream in a future time
Of Nassau streets by the sapphire bay,
Will bear this bit of the sunny clime.

"Outward Bound".

Between the sunset and the shade,
Where the twilight star is found,
The gleaming world in stillness laid
Begins to soften and to fade
When the ships are outward bound.

The vesper bell peals sweet and low
To the world its peaceful sound;
Its silver chiming, dying slow,
Slips out into the afterglow
When the ships are outward bound.

The crimson sea lies far and still
With a band of flame girt round,
While dark and tall upon a hill
The palm trees bend their stately will
When the ships are outward bound.

The angel of the night afar,
In a cloudy raiment gowned,
Shall guide them out across the bar
And light their way from star to star
When the ships are outward bound.

So may a calm lie on the sea,
The tempest's tossing drowned,
When just at evening, silently,
Into the vast eternity
Our ship is outward bound.

"When de Silver Lantern's Lighted."

HEN de silver lantern's lighted
Outside ma cabin door
An' de dreamy, sleepy shadders
Creep in across de floor,
I jes take ma picanniny
An' hol' him to ma breas',
While I listen to de crickets
As dey sing ma babe to res'.

So hush-a-by, yo' mammy's chile,
Cause de sun am sinkin' slow;
De little clouds done gone to sleep
While de wind am snorin' low,
An' shiny stars am peepin' down
Till dey lighten up de way
For wrinkly dreams de white moon-beams
Am a droppin' where yo' lay.

Den I dream about salvation
An' see de Glory Shore
Where de worriments an' troubles
Ain' gwine to come no more,
An' I knows ma little black man
Is gwine to lead me dere
Cause he looks jes like an angel
As I rock him in ma chair.

Yo' eyes can shut dere kivers down
Cause de stars am come to glow;
Yo' head can res' on mammy's breas'
While I hush yo' to and fro;
De dishes on de table,
An yo' marbles on de floor;
De sleepy time am creepin'
Right in through de open door.

So if jes de dear good Masser
Knows how I lub ma chile
He will let me in de Kingdom
For jes a little while,
Cause ma soul's mos' runnin' ober
Wid glory full an' free
When de silver lantern's shinin'
On little man an' me.

Dere, hush ma picanniny chile
Cause de night am gone to res',
An' turn yo' head a little more
Till its closer to ma breas'.
So hush ma honey, go to sleep
By de open cabin door
For mammy's gwine to hol' yo' tight
Till de day light come once more.

Speaking of cuteness the darky will say: "When cockroach give dance he no invite fowl." "When cockroach go to walk he no pass fowl-yard."

When some little twins were christened the father, upon being asked their names, replied, "Cherubim an' Seraphim, 'cause in de Good Book it says, 'dey continually do cry' and dat seems to be de case wid dese twins."

"When Fowl drink water him lift up him head and say, 'Tank God, tank God', but man, him don't say not'ing."

"Time is longer than rope."

"Lasses catch more fly dan vinegar."

"Shut mouth catch no fly."

"Mosquito don't know trouble till he get in smoke."

"Dog got four feet but he can't walk in two roads."

"Loose goat don't know how tied goat feel."

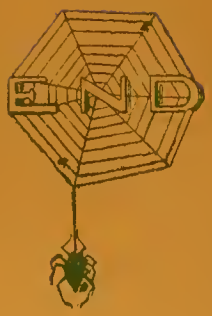
"Empty bag can't stan' up."

"Slack rope neber pop."

"Yer neber hear tree crack till wind blow."

"Good sense beat obeah (superstition)."

"Chile talk too much, tell his Pa's debt."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